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Consideration of the programmatic focus and planned outputs in the field of social development for the biennium 2016-2017

Programmatic focus and planned outputs in the field of social development for the biennium 2016-2017

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document contains the proposed areas of focus for the formulation of the programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of social development, which is under subprogramme 6 of programme 16 on economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific. The proposed areas are within the framework of the strategy of the subprogramme for the biennium 2016-2017, which was presented to the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission on 23 January 2014 and endorsed by the Commission at its seventieth session on 23 May 2014.

Contents

Page

I. Substantive priorities 1

II. Programme focus 2

Annex

The strategic framework 2016-2017, as endorsed by the Commission at its seventieth session, 23 May 2014 5

I. Substantive priorities

1. To support Asia-Pacific member States in responding to emerging trends in social development, including the challenges of rising inequalities, the substantive priorities in the field of social development for the biennium 2016 to 2017 are proposed to be:

(a) Responding to the challenges of population dynamics;

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(b) Promoting equal rights and access to opportunities for women and socially vulnerable groups;

(c) Strengthening social protection and decent work for all.

2. The above-mentioned priorities are in alignment with the strategic framework for subprogramme 6 of programme 16 on economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific that was presented to the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (ACPR) on 23 January 2014 and endorsed by the Commission on 23 May 2014, as reproduced in the annex to the present document for the convenient reference of the Committee.

3. These substantive priorities will be addressed by building a strong foundation through research and analysis which would contribute to a regional knowledge platform to strengthen the capacity of institutions in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP would use its convening function in order to ensure that the outcomes of the secretariat's substantive analysis and research contribute also to the development of regional norms and standards to address social development challenges in the region.

II. Programme focus

4. In line with the above-mentioned substantive priorities and implementation modalities, it is proposed that the following programmatic areas be addressed for the biennium 2016-2017.

(a) Research and analysis

(i) Priority will be accorded to strengthening the evidence base on issues related to rising inequalities and social vulnerabilities in order to support member States in their efforts to strengthen the social pillar of sustainable development. Towards this end, the secretariat will conduct research and analysis and develop knowledge products, including a comprehensive database of population and socioeconomic indicators for the Asian and Pacific region. An enhanced version of the "Social Protection Toolbox", an e-knowledge platform to support member States in building more robust and comprehensive social protection systems, will be further refined for specific national settings;

(ii) Analytical publications will be produced to highlight critical social development issues in the region. These include the following:

a. "Realizing the Potential of Youth", by focusing on the linkages between the dynamics of youth exclusion and sustainable development in the region;

b. The economic implications of population ageing in Asia and the Pacific and harnessing the "second demographic dividend", by examining current and projected impacts of population ageing on the labour market and identifying policies to harness the second demographic dividend;

c. "Women's Transformative Leadership in Asia and the Pacific", by exploring the nature and role of women's transformative leadership and its contribution to the achievement of gender equality and inclusive and sustainable development;

d. "Making Room for All: Improving Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific", by examining, among other things, the cost of exclusion of persons with disabilities;

(iii) Policy and working papers will be developed on key social development issues having impacts on inequality and vulnerability in the region, including social protection measures to reduce inequality and vulnerabilities, as well as income support schemes, including pensions for older persons; and gender equality, economic empowerment and leadership of women; in addition to technical materials on youth, ageing, international migration and HIV. Further, surveys and innovative research projects will be conducted to ensure the necessary evidence base for policymaking;

(iv) The periodical *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* will continue to be published to promote research on population and development issues and provide an evidence base for population policy formulation in the region. *Disability at a Glance*, a recurrent publication which provides a regional overview of disability policies and practices as well as country data and information, will also be produced to support the implementation of the *Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.*

(b) Intergovernmental convening and norm setting

Efforts will be focused on promoting a stronger Asia-Pacific voice to build intergovernmental consensus to accelerate further action to implement internationally and regionally agreed commitments. Through the grounding of its intergovernmental work in evidence-based research and analysis and the findings derived from capacity-development programmes, the secretariat will try to strengthen regionally agreed norms and standards to promote inclusive and sustainable development. The major intergovernmental reviews to take place during the biennium 2016-2017 include the following:

(i) *Midterm review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities*: The outcome is expected to identify progress made and remaining gaps in responding to the commitments set out in the *Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific*;

(ii) *The Asian and Pacific Intergovernmental Conference on Strengthening Youth Participation and Inclusive Policies*: The outcome is expected to be the adoption of a consensus document to identify regional priorities and actions to respond to the needs of youth and enhance their involvement in policymaking;

(iii) *The Third Regional Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific*: In the Review, it is expected that the progress made and challenges faced in the implementation the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the region will be assessed. The outcome is expected to serve as the regional input into the global review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and provide a regional framework of actions and strategies to prepare for rapidly ageing societies in the Asian and Pacific region.

(c) Technical cooperation

The secretariat will implement a series of technical cooperation projects to respond to regional needs that lend themselves to regional cooperation. The implementation modalities will be focused on building the capacity of institutions to enhance policy formulation and implementation, knowledge sharing, training and exchange of good practices. The outcomes of the projects will be used to inform the analytical and intergovernmental work of the secretariat.

(i) The capacity of member States to identify and respond to key population trends and dynamics affecting the region will be strengthened, including through implementation of technical cooperation activities to increase knowledge concerning the economic contribution of migrants in countries of origin and destination, protection of the rights of migrants and improvement of statistics on international migration. Technical cooperation activities will also be implemented to strengthen the capacity of national institutions to promote and protect the rights of older persons. Moreover, the capacity of member States to implement responsive youth policies and increase the participation of youth in inclusive and sustainable development will be enhanced;

(ii) The capacity of member States to broaden social protection coverage over the life course will be strengthened, including for older persons and persons living with and affected by HIV;

(iii) Capacity will be enhanced to accelerate implementation of international commitments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and promote the economic empowerment and leadership of women in Asia and the Pacific.

(d) Coordination with other United Nations entities to obtain synergies and complementarities to deliver as One UN:

In its capacity as Chair of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), the secretariat will continue to promote coherence and synergy in the efforts of the United Nations system in the area of social development. The secretariat will co-chair and contribute to the RCM thematic working groups on international migration including human trafficking; and gender equality and empowerment of women; as well as to the RCM-United Nations Development Group Thematic Working Group on Youth. The secretariat will continue to engage with the entities concerned in joint planning processes and joint implementation of activities, where appropriate, to strengthen the impact of United Nations work in the social sector in Asia and the Pacific.

Throughout its programmatic focus, special efforts will be made by the secretariat to advance gender equality and women's empowerment and address the differentiated impact of social development trends and policies on men and women.

Annex

The strategic framework 2016-2017, as endorsed by the Commission at its seventieth session, 23 May 2014[a]

Subprogramme 6
Social development

Objective of the Organization: To strengthen regional cooperation in building a socially inclusive society that protects, empowers and ensures equality for all social groups in Asia and the Pacific

Expected accomplishments of the secretariat	Indicators of achievement
(a) Enhanced knowledge, capacity and regional cooperation to address population and development trends, including their gender dimensions, in Asia and the Pacific	(a) (i) Percentage of respondents indicating that their knowledge has been enhanced through the analytical products of ESCAP on population and development trends and policies, including their gender dimensions (ii) Percentage of participants indicating that their knowledge and skills have been enhanced through ESCAP meetings and workshops on population ageing, migration and development, youth development and other population-related issues, including their gender dimensions (iii) Number of initiatives taken by member States, based on regional frameworks, to promote population and development policies and programmes, including their gender dimensions
(b) Enhanced knowledge, capacity and regional cooperation to strengthen social protection systems, including the health and gender dimensions, in Asia and the Pacific	(b) (i) Percentage of respondents indicating that their knowledge has been enhanced through the analytical products of ESCAP on social protection policies and good practices, including the health and gender dimensions (ii) Percentage of participants indicating that their knowledge and skills have been enhanced through ESCAP meetings and workshops on social protection systems and HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services, including their gender dimensions (iii) Number of initiatives by member States and stakeholders, based on regional frameworks, to strengthen social protection systems, including access to health care, and their gender dimensions

[a] The strategic framework for programme 16 on economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific was endorsed by the Commission at its seventieth session as noted in Commission decision 70/3.

(c) Enhanced knowledge, capacity and regional cooperation to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Asia and the Pacific	(c) (i) Percentage of respondents indicating that their knowledge has been enhanced through the analytical products of ESCAP on gender equality and women's empowerment policies and programmes (ii) Percentage of participants indicating that their knowledge and skills have been enhanced through ESCAP meetings and workshops on gender equality and women's empowerment (iii) Number of initiatives taken by member States, based on regional frameworks, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment
(d) Enhanced knowledge, capacity and regional cooperation to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific	(d) (i) Percentage of respondents indicating that their knowledge has been enhanced through the analytical products of ESCAP on disability-related policies and programmes (ii) Percentage of participants indicating that their knowledge and skills have been enhanced through ESCAP meetings and workshops on disability-inclusive development and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (iii) Number of initiatives by member States and stakeholders to promote the regional implementation of the Incheon Strategy to Make the Right Real for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, including goal 6: "Ensure gender equality and women's empowerment"

Strategy

16.35 The substantive responsibility for the subprogramme is vested in the Social Development Division. The strategic direction of the subprogramme is derived mainly from the commitments agreed upon through relevant United Nations intergovernmental processes, including: (a) the World Summit for Social Development; (b) the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development; (c) the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; (d) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; (e) the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; (f) the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; (g) the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002; (h) the World Programme of Action on Youth; (i) the United Nations Millennium Declaration (see General Assembly resolution 55/2) and the commitments adopted by the General Assembly in the outcome document, "Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals" (resolution 65/1); and (j) the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Intensifying our Efforts to Eliminate HIV and AIDS (General Assembly resolution 65/277, annex); it will also be guided by the post-2015 development agenda (as and when approved by the General

Assembly). Regional mandates that guide the subprogramme include the Incheon Strategy, the Bangkok Statement on the Asia-Pacific Review of the Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing+15, the outcome document of the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Assessment of Progress against Commitments in the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals and the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development of the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, which was adopted by a vote.

16.36 The subprogramme will aim to promote change at the policy and institutional levels. The main target group of the subprogramme will be government officials and institutions, particularly those involved in the formulation, implementation and management of social development policies and programmes. The strategy will focus on the conduct of applied research, analysis and the dissemination of knowledge products on social policy options, strategies and programmes as a basis for evidence-based decision-making by Governments. Good practices on social protection systems, including those that are gender-responsive and address the needs of vulnerable groups in society, will be analysed and documented for the purpose of adaptation and wider replication in the region. The Commission's convening role, particularly with regard to promoting regional cooperation and consensus building on accelerating the implementation of international commitments on population and development, gender equality and social integration of vulnerable groups, will be emphasized. Technical assistance to developing countries, including those in special situations, will be intensified to build national capacity, including through sharing of policy options, good experiences and good practices in the context of the transfer of knowledge and skills on a range of social development issues and through South-South cooperation. The subprogramme will adopt a multipronged strategy that incorporates cross-cutting issues, including gender responsiveness and a rights-based approach, into policies and programmes. Partnerships will be further strengthened with a range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations and research institutes. The subprogramme will coordinate closely with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other international organizations to achieve synergy and maximize impact in the region.